

Application No. 09/859,503

Docket No.: 4377.0062

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Solely in an effort to simplify further the issues on appeal and advance prosecution, Applicants have canceled claims 19-27 without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter they contain, and have amended claims 1, 2, 4, 8-17, 28, 32, 36 and 37 to encompass infringing subject matter.

Entry and favorable consideration of the above claim amendment(s) is believed to be appropriate and is hereby respectfully requested because such claim amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance; (b) do not raise any new issues requiring further search and/or consideration (since the amendments amplify or address issues previously discussed throughout the prosecution); and/or (c) do not present any additional claims without canceling a corresponding number of finally rejected claims. Upon entry of the above claim amendments, claims 1, 2, 4-18 and 28-38 will be pending. It is believed that the above claim amendments place this application in condition for allowance. Applicants reserve the right to file continuing applications for any canceled or unclaimed subject matter disclosed in the above-captioned patent application.

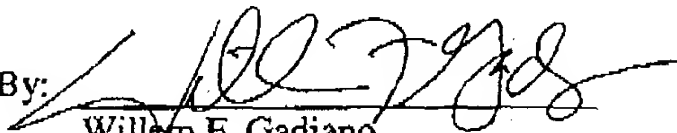
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Please grant any extensions of time deemed necessary. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in the small-entity fee(s) filed, or asserted to be filed, or which should have been filed herewith (or with any paper filed hereafter) to Deposit Account No. 14-1140.

Respectfully submitted,

NIXON & VANDERHYE P.C.

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CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this document (including any paper referred to as being attached or enclosed) is being sent to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office via facsimile transmission to (703) 872-9306 on the date indicated below, with a coversheet addressed to Commissioner for Patents, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, Washington, D.C., 20231.

Date: March 12, 2004

By: 

Willem F. Gadiano, Registration No. 37,136